



# Safety & Total Health

N E W S L E T T E R

## Hotline Numbers

JSC Emergency	x33333
Ellington Field	x44444
Emerg. Prepared.	x34249
Safety Hotline	x37500
Safety Office	x36345
JSC Clinic	x34111

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## Purses snatched!

Law enforcement officials are warning shoppers to be wary of purse-snatchers at the Kemah Wal-Mart store parking lot.

Two separate incidents were reported within a 4-day period according to Kemah Assistant Police Chief Roy Owen. Thieves in both incidents appeared to use similar methods: driving up next to a person who was unloading a cart, jumping out, grabbing that person's purse, and driving away. Both victims had left their purses in their shopping cart while unloading purchases.

"We don't have a good description of the suspects yet," said Owen, "because they acted quickly. By the time the victim realized what had happened, only the back of a running figure could be seen."

Owen said the thieves likely prowl the parking lot looking for people occupied in this manner, making purses easy to grab. Shoppers should hold on to purses when unloading carts, and they should lock their cars if they leave to return the cart. Owen's greatest concern is that a shopper could get hurt in a confrontation with the thieves. □



## Could you survive crowd panic?

By Pamela Baughman/MEI Fire Safety Engineer

When I attended the Bon Jovi concert at this year's Houston Rodeo held in



Reliant Stadium and was surrounded by more than 68,000 people, dark thoughts crossed my mind. How would I get out safely if somehow the beautiful fireworks display ignited the acoustical drapes hung from the ceiling? Reminded of the recent nightclub tragedies in Rhode Island and Illinois, when innocent, fun-loving spectators

fell victim to an environment that quickly went bad, my instinct for survival soon had me assessing the situation. What could I, what should I, do?

### Locate two exits

When you first enter a facility, whether a restaurant, hotel, or stadium, take

*Please see PANIC on page 2*

## The 600-pound monster at home

By Mary Peterson

Although it's often the largest and heaviest piece of moving equipment in a home, sometimes weighing as much as 600 pounds, many people fail to recognize the potentially deadly consequences associated with automatic garage doors.

The Illinois parents of a 4-year-old boy learned this tragically after a trip to the supermarket. The couple went into the home to put away the groceries while the child stayed outside. After some minutes, the boy's father returned to the garage only to find his 4-year-old son lying face down with the garage door pinned

on his shoulders. The child died in a hospital 3 days later.

Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL) has received reports of children being trapped beneath automatic garage doors that were left in a partially opened position. When stopped in this position, the reactivated door could initially travel in a downward direction, thus increasing pressure on someone trapped beneath the door. Worse, in a state of panic, repeated operation of the door may not result in the immediate reversal of the door to the open position, especially if the door operator has not been properly maintained.

*Please see DOOR on page 4*

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## Panic

(Continued from page 1)

note of at least two ways out. Recognize that most people will try to exit the way they entered the facility, and that doorway will likely be the most crowded space in the event of an emergency. Notice whether the exits have lit exit signs and/or emergency lighting. If not, try to memorize the path(s) in your mind and notice any markers that could indicate your correct exit path. For example, count the number of doors between you and the exit or stairwell. Remember, you could be doing this in the dark in the midst of a lot of other people.

Should you be unable to locate emergency exits, ask an employee where they are. If you find one that is blocked or chained shut, notify building security immediately in a manner that is friendly and helpful. Don't make a scene. If you are met

with refusal to unblock an emergency exit, consider notifying the police or fire authorities by means of cell phone. Or, leave. Don't risk staying in a building you believe to be unsafe.

### Take a look around

Scan your environment for possible impediments to an escape. Are paths clear? What, if anything, could move into it? Keep in mind that a panicked crowd will likely cause obstacles to be pushed into your path.

Notice housekeeping. Does the place look well cared for? Does it have a lot of combustibles hanging from the ceiling or attached to the walls? Should this be the case, you could expect a fire to move even more rapidly in this kind of environment. Do you see a sprinkler system? If so, this could buy you a little more time to get out. Take note of any smoke detectors as well, for these are your best warning in the event of fire.



### If it gets bad

Crowded areas always produce a higher threat to your safety. No matter what the emergency condition is, crowd control is always difficult when panic sets in. If the crowd begins to sway, start moving. Forget your personal belongings. Do not stop or go back for any items, even a purse, as time is precious. Move away from the direction of the main crowd pressure, stepping sideways to the crowd movement, and try to find a wall. Should you fall, try to keep moving, crawling if you have to, until you regain your footing. If you cannot get up, cover your head with your arms and curl up. Take a buddy, and always have a prearranged meeting place once you are out of the building so you can be accounted for.

Panic situations can often be anticipated, so be aware of the atmosphere and what's going on around you. It could mean the advantage in getting out safely, when mere seconds can make the difference. □



## Letters from Readers

*Opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Safety Reliability & Quality Assurance Directorate*

### Vehicles, how stable?

Concerning the article

"Dangerous When Wet" [Mar.], I'd like to add another consideration.

The car makes a major difference, and not just the overpowered sports cars with wide tires. My daughter used to drive a Subaru Justy (with good tire tread). One day I switched cars because she had noticed the tendency to

hydroplane. I thought I could handle anything—I'd driven years in snow and ice in addition to my recent experiences here. So, I was on my way to work from Alvin, turned onto FM 517 from the red light, and was getting up to speed. It was raining consistently, but not heavy or driven. I shifted into 5th gear in this very underpowered car going on a perfectly straight and level section of the road. I reached 45 mph when, in my estimate 4 seconds, the car spun around about 6 times and wound up upside down in the ditch. There was no warning, no standing water, etc.

I don't know whether there are rating systems where a consumer can get information on car stability; it would sure help if there were such things. Now, whenever I buy a car,

I look for information on handling, especially in wet conditions.

Bill Steckert/Raytheon

*According to JSC/MEI safety engineer John Winters, the National Transportation Safety Board does look at stability of various makes and models. But, this is essentially an "on demand" process. For example, if a vehicle has a demonstrated tendency to roll over, it will be evaluated. Of course, all automotive manufacturers want their vehicles to be safe for the consumers, and all vehicles have varying degrees of stability based on their design. While there may be programs that do look at the overall stability of a vehicle, they are likely internal to the manufacturer.*

Editor

*The Safety & Total Health Newsletter is a monthly publication of the S&TH Communications Office. Send comments and suggestions to [sthnews@ems.jsc.nasa.gov](mailto:sthnews@ems.jsc.nasa.gov).*

*Editor . . . . . Mary Peterson  
Newsletter Advisor . . Elmer Johnson*



## Total Health Reports

# Asthma – when breathing isn't easy

By Sandra Amundson, RN, Nurse Manager, Occupational Medicine Clinic

**T**o most people, spring is a glorious time of year. Not so for the asthma sufferer.

For, as the grasses and trees sprout and as flowers come into bloom with their delicate pollens swelling the air, so, proportionately, does the misery of asthma grow.

Asthma is a chronic condition that occurs when the main air passages of the lungs and bronchial tubes become inflamed. As the muscles of the bronchial walls tighten, extra mucus is produced, narrowing the airways. This may lead from minor wheezing to severe respiratory distress.

Although asthma is preventable, treatable, and controllable, some 12 to 15 million people in the U.S. alone, including 5 million children, are affected by the disease, which accounts for some 500,000 hospitalizations and more than 5,000 deaths each year. And, unfortunately, these numbers are on the upswing.

### *Causes, risk factors*

You are more likely to develop asthma if you have an inherited predisposition to the condition and are sensitive to allergens or irritants in the environment. You could be overly sensitive to a wide range of environmental triggers.

The usual trigger in asthmatics under 30 years of age is allergies. Respiratory allergies, however, don't appear to play a major role in older individuals. An asthma attack may come from exposure to any number of irritants, including allergens (pollen, cockroach, molds), air pollutants, smoking and secondhand smoke, viruses (common cold), perfume, physical exertion, cold air, emotional stress, sinusitis, certain medications, food, and food preservatives, just to name a few. Other common irritants are adhesives, paints, detergents, dander, hair, fur, gases,

smoke, and environmental pollutants. Dyes, paints, cleaners, wood dust, latex, seafood, glues, and metals may set off some occupational asthma.

Asthma, the most common chronic illness of childhood, has seen a dramatic rise in the number of cases over the last decade. You're at greatest risk of developing the disease if you live in the inner city where environmental pollutants abound. Your risk is further increased if you smoke or are exposed to secondhand smoke; have one or both parents afflicted with asthma; have a history of childhood respiratory infections; experienced low birth weight, are obese, or suffer gastric reflux disease.

### *Signs and symptoms*

Asthma signs and symptoms can range from mild to very severe. Some individuals experience occasional episodes of asthma with moderate, short-lived symptoms such as wheezing. A cough may become worse after exposure to an asthma trigger such as pollen, mold, or tobacco smoke. All

asthma attacks give a warning, so learn to recognize warning signs. Treating symptoms early can help prevent attacks or keep them from becoming worse.

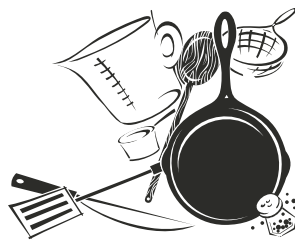
### *Treatment, self-care*

The primary care physician or specialist should develop a treatment plan for an asthmatic designed specifically for that individual.

Avoiding known irritants is primary in self-care. It is also important to ♦ exercise regularly; ♦ use air-conditioning to reduce pollen exposure and lower indoor humidity; ♦ reduce pet dander and keep things dust free; and ♦ limit the use of contact lenses when the pollen count is high, as pollen grains can become trapped under the lens. Also, stress reduction techniques can help control and prevent asthmatic attacks.

Do consult your physician if you are having respiratory symptoms that may progress into asthma. Take care now, and enjoy the spring! □

**For more information, visit  
[www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)**

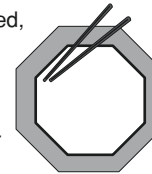


## Help Your Heart Recipes

*This recipe is intended to be part of an overall healthful eating plan. Total fat intake should be less than 30 percent of your total calories for a day—not for each food or recipe.*

### *Beef Sukiyaki*

1 pound lean round steak, well trimmed,  
cut into 1-inch strips  
2 tablespoons water  
1/2 cup celery, diagonally cut  
1 green pepper, sliced  
1-1/2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms or  
1 can (8 oz.) mushrooms, drained



1/2 cup green pepper, chopped  
1 can (10-3/4 oz.) condensed  
beef broth undiluted  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
1/2 cup sliced water chestnuts  
1 tablespoon cornstarch

Brown meat in pan with 1 tablespoon water. Add vegetables, beef broth, and soy sauce. Cook over low heat 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender, stirring frequently. Add water chestnuts and stir 30 seconds. Combine remaining water with cornstarch. Add to meat mixture, stirring until thickened. Yield: 4 servings.

*Per serving: calories 223, fat 6.4g, carbohydrates 10g, cholesterol 78mg, sodium 899mg.*

## Cryptogram Corner

Solve the puzzle by simple letter substitution. Each letter is always represented by the same letter, and no letter ever represents itself. Hint: **T = K**.

MLS MBCCR OLM MZIC GC PWZVR CHPCCR  
AGC AQSC QA AWWT AW PIWMM AGC EVWWI  
LUR IZU KCUCLAG AGC PVWMQUY RWWI.  
KZA, LVL M, GC VCLIUCR  
QA OLM NZMA L SQILYC  
OGCU AGCJ EWZUR GQS BQUUCR  
QU GQM YLILYC.



### Door (Continued from page 1)

#### Maintenance is critical

Something we use daily with little apparent problem is also subject to neglect. Don't let this happen with your automatic garage door.

Read and follow your owner's manual. If you don't have one, look for the model number on the back of the door, or check the lock handle, hinges, or other hardware for the manufacturer's name and request a manual from the manufacturer.

In addition to regular lubrication, the UL recommends inspection once a month. This should include a reversal test, a force setting test, a counterbalance test, and testing of any additional safety devices on the garage door opener.

In doing the reversal test, see that your door reverses when it comes down on a full roll of paper towels. *Do not* test by using a firm object such as a block of wood; this does not indicate whether a door would reverse without causing injury to a child or pet in its path. Doors failing the paper towel test should be disconnected until they are professionally serviced.

Test the force setting of your garage door opener by holding the

bottom of the door as it closes. If the door does not reverse readily, the force may be excessive and need adjusting (see owner's manual). Test the reversing feature after each adjustment.

Visually inspect the door springs, cables, rollers, pulleys, and other door hardware for signs of wear. If you suspect problems, have a qualified person make adjustments or repairs.

#### Teach your children

Garage door openers are not toys. Never let your children play "beat the door" as it is closing. Set a good example yourself by never walking under a moving door. Be sure the door activation switch is at least 5 feet or higher from the floor, out of children's reach, and keep your portable openers locked in your car or safely inaccessible. Finally, leave your garage door only in a fully open or fully closed position (never partially open) to avoid a potential entrapment hazard.

Injuries from garage doors are not as infrequent as you may think, and they range from an injured or lost finger to brain damage and death. Keep an open mind to safety the next time you watch your garage door gently close. □

## Bicycle target practice?

A JSC complainant said in a recent Close Call Report:

"As I was exiting the back door of Bldg. 57, a bicycle passed by on the sidewalk with significant speed and quite close to the building. There was good potential for the bicycle to run over me. Consequences from such events could be sometimes fatal."

While we think of bicycles as a relatively benign form of transportation, riders at JSC, Ellington Field, and the SCTF are, nevertheless, subject to many of the same rules governing motor vehicles, which include

- Follow all state and local traffic rules and laws for bicycle riders
- Stop at pedestrian crosswalks, stop signs, and red lights
- Do not pass a vehicle that is stopped at a crosswalk
- Avoid riding on sidewalks if possible
- Limit your speed
- Yield to pedestrians at all times. Warn pedestrians before you pass them

For more detailed information, refer to the JSC Safety Handbook, JPG1700.1, Chapter 5.2, which can be found on the JSC Safety & Total Health website under the link "Handbook." □

## Solution to March puzzle

Varooooom! Zip! Zoom! Down the highways and byways we go  
In our shiny vehicles that we often drive fast, rather than slow.  
But remember to watch for all signals and pedestrians too.  
Drive with the care you'd expect—of someone driving toward you!